

## Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00  
DODE-00 EB-08 OES-07 NASA-01 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02  
SS-15 AID-05 /081 W  
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FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9969  
INFO AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE  
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS  
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

S E C R E T BANGUI 0607

BRUSSELS FOR EC

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: EWWT, SWEL, CT

SUBJ: PHOTOGRAPHS OF UBANGUI/ZAIRE RIVERS

1. THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT JEAN-PIERRE BOUBA CALLED ME IN MARCH 15 TO REQUEST USG ASSISTANCE IN PHOTOGRAPHING THE SAND BANK CONFIGURATIONS OF THE UBANGUI AND ZAIRE RIVERS ON THE 200 KM STRETCH SOUTH OF BANGUI. BOUBA SAID THE CAE WAS FACING A NATIONAL CALAMITY BECAUSE OF THE LEVEL OF THE RIVER WHICH WAS AT ITS LOWEST SINCE THE SAHELIAN DROUGHT OF 1974. ALL TRANSPORT UP THE RIVER TO THE CAE WAS NOW SUSPENDED AND WOULD PROBABLY REMAIN SO UNTIL AT LEAST LATE APRIL. AID WAS BEING SOUGHT FROM THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY (FED) AND EMERGENCY STEPS WERE UNDERWAY TO TRANSPORT NECESSARY SUPPLIES FROM DOUALA TO BANGUI BY ROAD. HOWEVER, IN ORDER FOR THE GOCAE TO PREPARE A VALID AND REALISTIC ASSISTANCE REQUEST FOR THE FED, IT NEEDED AERIAL PHOTOS OF THE RIVER SOUTH OF BANGUI. BOUBA ASSURED ME THAT THE GOCAE WOULD TAKE CARE OF ALL NECESSARY CLEARANCES WITH THE ZAIRIAN AND CONGOLESE GOVERNMENTS.

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2. COMMENT: THE SITUATION ON THE RIVER IS INDEED CALAMITOUS AND THE ALREADY FRAGILE ECONOMY OF THE CAE IS FEELING THE EFFECTS OF THE UNPRECEDENTED LOW WATERS. THE PROBLEMS OF THE RIVER TRANSPORT SYSTEM ARE AS MUCH PROBLEMS ARISING FROM POOR MANAGEMENT AS FROM THE DROUGHT, BUT THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT NATURAL FACTORS HAVE AGGRAVATED AN ALREADY SERIOUS SITUATION. IT WOULD BE HIGHLY DESIRABLE IF WE COULD RESPOND POSITIVELY TO THIS

REQUEST WHICH COULD HAVE HUMANITARIAN, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL BENEFITS. THREE POSSIBILITIES OCCUR TO US: A) TO USE THE DAO AIRCRAFT IN KINSHASA; B) TO BRING IN ANOTHER AIRCRAFT; AND C) TO MAKE AVAILABLE HIGH RESOLUTION PHOTOS FROM LANDSAT III. THE FIRST ALTERNATIVE IS OBVIOUSLY THE SIMPLEST BUT RAISES A NUMBER OF TRICKY QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE GENERAL USE AND PURPOSES OF THE PLANE. IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE THESE PROBLEMS IT MIGHT BE DESIRABLE TO INFORM THE GOCAE THAT WE HAD MADE SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS TO EQUIP THE PLANE FOR THIS MISSION. WITH REGARD TO THE SECOND AND THIRD OPTIONS, WE DO NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT INFORMATION AT HAND TO KNOW WHETHER THERE ARE OTHER PLANES IN AFRICA, PERHAPS WORKING IN THE SAHEL, WHICH COULD BE USED FOR THIS PURPOSE OR WHETHER LANDSAT III IMAGES ARE YET AVAILABLE.

3. WOULD APPRECIATE THE DEPARTMENT'S PRELIMINARY RESPONSE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE SINCE I ANTICIPATE AN ESCALATING OFFICIAL CONCERN AS THE SITUATION OF SUPPLYING BANGUI BECOMES INCREASINGLY ACUTE.  
QUAINTON

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** NATURAL RESOURCES, PHOTOGRAPHS, RIVERS, FOREIGN ASSISTANCE  
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**Draft Date:** 15 mar 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
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**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
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**Disposition Reason:**  
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**Executive Order:** GS  
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**Subject:** PHOTOGRAPHS OF UBANGUI/ZAIRE RIVERS  
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**To:** STATE  
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